

# VANGUARD . . . . .

a libertarian communist journal

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# Why This Magazine?

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For a number of reasons, which the readers of VANGUARD will learn from the present and subsequent issues of this magazine, the libertarian revolutionary movement weakened considerably in the post-war period. But this decline was only temporary. The last four or five years have already shown us to what heights we can rise. Let us but observe the phenomenal growth of the anarcho-sindicalist movement in Spain during these years, to one of the most powerful and vital revolutionary movements in the world, astonishing and confounding authoritarians of all shades. Although historical conditions were more favorable to the development of the anarchist movement in Spain, that country is not the only one in whose soil the roots of anarchism can sprout. Already, anarchists in many other parts of the world are beginning to emerge from the level of platitudinous generalities, adapting their basic principles to contemporary realities and attracting those younger rebel elements who refuse to be crushed and warped by authoritarian Marxist dogmatism and one-party infallibility.

In the United States however, the anarchist movement has much less influence than in most other countries. But this fact certainly does not preclude the possibility of the building up of such a movement in this country. Indeed, there are many factors that are in our favor, among which the militant traditions and struggles of large sections of the American working class are of no small importance. However, there is as yet no revolutionary group in this country capable of directing these traditions and the discontent generated by the present crisis into intelligent revolutionary channels, the delusions of some naive communists to the contrary notwithstanding.

It is to the task of helping to build a movement which will concretize our libertarian aspirations in the light of the needs of the American working class and the development of contemporary condi-

tions that the Vanguard Group dedicates itself. But we cannot even begin this task without the most elementary means of expression, that is, a paper or magazine. Realizing the importance of having a publication of our own, we started a mimeographed monthly magazine three years ago. This first attempt attracted some attention and we were enabled to change from a mimeographed magazine to a printed one which continued for seven issues and then was suspended because of lack of funds. We were without a voice until the summer of 1934 when the IL MARTELLO, an Italian Anarchist fortnightly newspaper offered to let us edit a page of their publication in English. It was of course understood that this would continue only until we could collect enough funds to publish our own paper. Since printing is very expensive and at present beyond our means, we have done the next best thing: we have bought a multigraph machine and are doing the setting and multigraphing ourselves.

The English page of IL MARTELLO has discontinued in favor of this more enlarged magazine. We now have a bit more space in which to expound the philosophy and tactics of libertarian communism. We have more (but still limited) space for articles by prominent and capable comrades both here and abroad, for news and information about the anarchist and labor movements in Spain and other countries which can be found in practically no other English publication in this country, for reviews of important books, for articles dealing with various important theoretical questions and we shall be able to include in each issue a critical evaluation from the libertarian communist point of view of current economic, political and social developments of importance.

We hope that this new effort will succeed in putting the VANGUARD on a permanent basis. But this is something only our friends and readers can decide. They must support us with subscriptions NOW!



## Reversing The Trend

MORE than a half a century ago the rising movement of international socialism experienced its first rift--the most serious one in its history--leading to the splitting off of the First International into two irreconcilable camps--the one of Marxism and that of libertarian socialism represented by the Bakunin faction. The scope of differences causing that split was extensive, ranging from general conceptions of the nature of social reconstruction to specific problems of revolutionary strategy. But wide as the range was, it could ultimately be brought down to one central problem -- the one of the place and significance of liberty in the struggles for and the building of a new social order. Should liberty be considered of derivative value, valid only in measure that adequate social conditions warrant its application to social life, or must it be held as the first and indispensable condition of a normally functioning society, rendering it imperative upon the socialist movement to integrate the principles of freedom into its daily struggles and its tentative projections of the new social order. Such was the central problem arising before a movement that was just emerging from the stage of utopian nebulosities into the one of vigorous struggles for conquest of power.

The dividing line drawn by this problem was deep and sharp. It drove an ever widening wedge into the rapidly growing split of the two factions of the First International. To the Marxist liberty was a reflex of a definite social environment which brings forth automatically the need for freedom and makes inevitable the realization of it at a given historic moment. From that point of view a consistent policy of struggle for liberty would require a concentration upon the prime movers of the process of realization of freedom and a disregard for mere reflexes lacking the force of actuating factors. Paradoxically enough, the Marxists maintained, liberty, for its full realization, must first

shrink to the vanishing point in order to allow the molding of those social conditions that will automatically bring out its renaissance upon a larger and more universal scale. The exigencies of the storm and stress period of the preliminary phase of struggles for conquest of power, as well as of the transitional stages of building up a communist society, forbid not only the expansion of the traditional values of liberalism, but even render it impossible to embody the already existing values into the transitional framework of a new society. It is only upon the completion of the full structure of the communist society that liberty will sprout spontaneously from the already prepared soil of an adequate social environment.

It is against this stultifying conception of liberty that the libertarian wing of the First International rose up in arms. Liberty, as it was maintained by Michael Bakunin, the great rebellious spirit of the socialist movement of that epoch, is not a derivative, an automatic reflex of more fundamental factors; it cannot be realized by a process of self-negation. The struggle for liberty is in itself fundamental to the development of the human race, it is itself a primary factor of historic evolution. Where given full scope, it profoundly modifies the course of human development, creating the very premises upon which the forward course of historic progress must necessarily rest. Without any libertarian struggle no progress of any kind is possible, less so the realization of the humanistic ideals of socialism. It is the libertarian struggles that will prepare the ground for the realization of socialism and not the converse, for, as Bakunin said in one of his prophetic moods: "Socialism without liberty is mere swinishness" and out of that swinishness or spontaneous sprouting of liberty is possible, no amount of social engineering can take the place of arduous libertarian struggles.



The road advocated by Bakunin was the more difficult one. It placed the main emphasis upon human activity and not upon automatic social processes. It demanded a much greater effort, a keen sense of libertarian values and a readiness to take up arms on behalf of those values as such. And, as it frequently happens, where the necessary creative upswing is lacking, history fell back upon the line of least resistance, preferring to follow the tempting short cuts and easy roads of effortless realization of the libertarian ideal. History temporarily removed the Bakunin faction from the fields of struggles as a serious contender for power, in the most important countries at least, leaving the Marxists a free field for the application of their ideas of engineering liberty in the roundabout manner of working upon the supposedly primary factors of social development. Such a triumph became feasible because of the feebleness of the libertarian traditions in many a country of active revolutionary struggles and the lack of revolutionary experience in the more advanced countries that were more fully saturated with the traditions of liberalism. All this formed a void into which the socialist movement of a half a century ago rushed without being aware of the dangerous incline of its course. At that time the triumphant use of Marxism was interpreted as the triumph of science over utopianism, of social engineering over subjective romanticism. Little was it realized yet that this tempting short cut lay on a line of descending incline-away from the heights of humanitarian ideals toward which Socialism was reaching out in its first period of existence toward the morass of state totalitarianism and social fascism.

For when we come to consider the dismal turn of events of the last few years in the perspective of socialist development since the split of the First International, we see clearly how closely bound up are the Fascist victories of our period with the first steps made by the Socialist movement on the downward path of deterioration of libertarian values of Socialism. There is a direct line of causal

connection between the sweep of fascist victories and the triumph in the international socialist movement of a half a century ago of a social philosophy that deprecated and belittled the importance of libertarian struggles. At first it manifested itself in the gradual diminution of the intensity of struggles for liberty, in the lowered tonus of libertarian aspirations, in the letting down on the drive for enlarging and deepening the scope of the already existing liberal values. On the surface the pre-war socialist movement was democratic and liberal, claiming to be the rightful heir of the libertarian struggles and traditions of the past. But in reality that was nothing but an acquiescence, mere conformity to the generally accepted values. The true spirit of liberalism was foreign to it. It showed a lack of passion for liberty; it let itself be manacled too easily by the monstrously centralized apparatuses of various parties and trade unions; it serenely ignored the ominous tendencies toward the gradual regimentation within its ranks, justifying it on the grounds of expediency, as though sheer expediency, when not implemented by the rebellious libertarian spirit, can ever mold Socialist organizations adequate to the humanitarian implications of its ideal. It did not form an active part of the swelling libertarian tide of the pre-war period, it showed itself incapable of understanding the true spirit animating the libertarian traditions and institutions of the past, which is the spirit of dynamic action, dynamic struggle for an ever greater expansion of liberty. Shorn of that spirit, those traditions and institutions become mere empty shells, easily shattered at the first onset of barbaric forces of social atavism. And in falling short of that dynamic spirit, in substituting for it mere conformity to rooted patterns of social life in denying the autonomous value of such a spirit the Marxists of even the comparatively liberal variety of pre-war period had already well prepared the ground for the coming demoralization of the Socialist movement.

This was the more inevitable that it



led to the weakening of the drive for the realization of Socialism. The old liberal institutions cannot be simply superimposed upon the new social edifice, they have to undergo a complex process of readjustment in order to fit into a socialist economy. But in order to undertake the recasting of the old liberal values in the mold of a Socialist society, a fiercely burning flame of libertarian aspirations is needed, which would prevent the impairment of those values in the course of such a refashioning where such a spirit is lacking where mere loyalty and a sense of conformity is the determining attitude, an undue regard for form becomes inevitable, a conservative over-emphasis upon mere externalities of political life. The Marxists of the Second International became political conservative exactly because of the lack of any genuine libertarian drive, they found themselves clinging to political forms into which the new social content could not be forced, and that is why they became timid and apprehensive as to the possibilities of pouring such content into modern actualities. The cowardice and supineness of the Socialist parties in regard to Fascist aggression, their astounding failure to make use of the most auspicious opportunities for bringing about the desired social changes, are directly due to their obstinate clinging to obsolete political forms, to the outer shell of liberalism all of which came as a result of the bitter lack of creative work along the lines of searching out adequate political expressions of the new social idea. There is a direct line of descent from the triumph in the labor movement of the Marxist idea with its deprecatory attitude toward libertarian struggles and the wilting of the will to Socialist action, which by now forms the most striking characteristic of the present Socialist movement and the most important factor in the breaking forth of the waves of the Fascist reaction.

But manifest as those signs of the gradual deterioration of the libertarian idea, with all its fatal consequences, were with the Marxist socialism of the pre-War

period, they still hardly gave full expression to the reactionary implication of the Marxist attitude toward liberty. The movement of that period was firmly welded into the liberal and democratic framework of political life, and it required an extraordinary amount of perspicacity and insight into the implications of the Marxist doctrine to see that the amalgamation between the Socialist movement and the liberal democratic institutions was a purely mechanical association, but not an organic synthesis. That the first great social crisis bringing the socialist movement into the line of a decisive historical action would disrupt this mechanical amalgamation was beyond the range of vision of most of the contemporaneous observers of political life. And even now, 17 years after this severance has already taken place in a country where Marxism proved to be the determining force of the course of revolution, there are many who attribute it to the difficulties of the first social revolution fighting its way against terrific odds in an atmosphere of complete isolation. People still fail to realize that great as all those factors were in contributing their share toward the monstrous distortion of the socialist idea in Soviet Russia they were still of secondary importance when compared to the degrading effect of the monopolization of the revolutionary processes by a liberty-hating social philosophy like the authoritarian socialism of the Marxian brand.

The entire course of deterioration of revolutionary values, of the gradual sinking of the revolution from the heights of the October principles to the low depths of Stalinism was adumbrated in the initial scheme evolved by the revolutionary Marxist wing of the First International and then expanded by Lenin in the first period of the revolution. At first it was the suppression of a few rights proclaimed by the October Revolution, the curbing of its democratic and libertarian spirit in the name of revolutionary expediency, then the stifling of other revolutionary groups leading to the monopoly of a single party, that was followed



inevitably by the crushing of opposition of that party, and the regime of a personal dictatorship, the Fascization of all the functions of social life and the swallowing up of society by a totalitarian State. Seventeen years of the most furious efforts of building up those very foundations which, according to the Marxian scheme, should in themselves generate the libertarian spirit, Soviet Russia presents the most dismal and hopeless spectacle of a country where liberty is being extirpated to the very roots, driven out of every nook and corner of social life, Russia has become the graveyard of liberty, the model and pattern of all the reactionary movements of our time.

The factitious scheme of securing liberty by circumvention, by dialectical self-abnegation was given the fullest

historical opportunity and as a result we have in some countries a catastrophic drop in the sense of liberal values, and great weakening of the power of resistance to the subterranean forces of social atavism, and in others— the complete severance of the Socialist ideal from any libertarian values, the degeneration of Socialism to the level of a semi-fascist actuality. And it is this scheme therefore that has to be rejected if the Socialist movement ever hopes to reverse the powerful tide of social reaction now sweeping the world. Back to the fundamentals; back to the great ideas of the First International as formulated by its libertarian wing; back to the ideal of libertarian Socialism equably moving along both coordinates of human progress— the Socialization of wealth and the expansion of individual liberty.

## Landmarks of Thermidor

UP TO the recent events in Soviet Russia it had been the invariable claim of the numerous apologists of the Communist dictatorship that cruel and harsh as the latter were in regard to the class enemies of the revolution, they softened down almost to the point of attenuation when turned against the recalcitrant elements of the revolution itself. Unlike the French Revolution offering the ghastly spectacle of one revolutionary faction exterminating the other in a series of bloody purges, the Russian Revolution, as represented by its guiding force, the Communist party, has shown a certain moderation in dealing with the various oppositions. The heavy hand of revolutionary terror was never let down with all its fatal weight upon those rebellious elements that sprang from the ranks of the revolutionists. Fratricidal strife never assumed such proportions as in France and the blood of murdered revolutionaries will never rise upon the historical hori-

zon of the Russian revolution as a perpetual taunt and a bitter comment upon its achievements.

Such fatuous apologies found wide acceptance because the first period of the revolution remained very little known to people outside the narrow circle of special students of it. The monstrous falsification of the history of the period reverted to by the Communist Party succeeded well. The bloody Machiavelian record of the latter, of its dealings with other revolutionary parties and groupings was utterly disbelieved when presented to the attention of the numerous sympathizers. And as to the too obvious course of persecutions in regard to the oppositions within the party, that was minimized and belittled to the extent of having it almost fit into the pattern of the usual policy of repressions pursued by every democratic state against the too unruly elements. Apart from the spectacular, but



comparatively mild, vicissitudes befalling the leaders of the opposition, very little was known of the cruelties perpetrated upon the rank and file of the oppositionists, the occasional groan of the tortured political prisoners wafted from the Soviet dungeons having been too easily drowned by the roar of the official Communist propaganda representing it but as the dying out echoes of a stifled counter revolution.

And perhaps all that official ballyhoo would not be sufficient in itself, did it not fall upon too willing ears well prepared for its reception by the widely spread fallacy in regard to the temporary nature of the policy of repressions pursued by the Communist dictatorship. The belief is still current that somehow, not in an altogether obvious manner, the Soviet state is moving in the direction of greater liberalization of its institutions. Another few years of economic victories, few more gains made along the lines of consolidating the basic positions of the revolution-and the long heralded process of the dying away of the State will begin to manifest itself in some form or another. Hence the pathetic hopes placed upon the alphabetical rearrangement of the letters of the G.P.U., upon some vague hint thrown out by the dictator himself- and hence also the deaf ear turned to the desperate cries coming from the persecuted revolutionaries of Soviet Russia. Those cries were disturbing to the fallacy, they raised disturbing questions, they pointed to certain ominous tendencies that could not be explained away as mere exigencies of a revolutionary struggle against the hostile forces of the old regime.

But no amount of official ballyhoo and psychological subterfuges will ever succeed in camouflaging basic historic processes for a very long time. Ultimately those processes must reveal themselves in some striking event. The shot that assassinated Kiroff and the unspeakable butcheries following it were in the nature of such an outbreak. In clear unmistakable signs, sealed by the blood of hundreds of

butchered young revolutionists, they revealed to the world that the October revolution, distorted from its very beginning by the fatal trend toward Party dictatorship, has already proceeded so far on the road to bureaucratic degeneration that the main drive of its monstrous repressive apparatus is now directed against workers, against young revolutionists who, in their own groping manner, try to clear the October revolution of the abominations which have crept into the working out of its revolutionary processes. It was the ghost of the October revolution, of its libertarian and democratic aspirations, that raised such panicky fears among the ruling clique owing its power to the distortion and degeneration of the very spirit of that revolution. And in striking out in such a cannibal manner against those that try to evoke that spirit the governing circles of Soviet Russia have cut themselves off the further from any chances of reconciliation with it.

The Rubicon has been crossed. From now on there will be but two camps facing each other: the forces of the growing revolt inspired by the principles of the October revolution and the camp of new privilege driving the revolution toward its ultimate degeneration; preparing the ground for the next consecutive step to follow the last bloody events- the seizure of power by some military adventurer. History does not always repeat itself, but the basic pattern of the development of the Russian Revolution is so close to the French one that, unless forestalled by a new revolutionary upsurge, it will necessarily be capped by the same inglorious anti-climax as the latter. And it is upon the road of such a tragic denouement that the last even's form such a significant landmark. S-X

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#### OUTLINE OF LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM

We have just published in mimeographed form a brief outline of the principles of Libertarian Communism. A copy may be procured by sending five cents in stamps to VANGUARD, P.O. Box 32 Station D, N.Y. City



## A "Daily Worker" Columnist Disposes of the Anarchist Movement

THE Daily Worker of New York, in a series of articles by Harry Gannes, a prominent communist, gives what purports to be a true account of the recent Spanish revolt. In actuality it is a most inaccurate and libellous account in which the communists are pictured as heroes and leaders of the revolt, and the anarchists as cowards and traitors. Every other paragraph contains some reference to the "betrayal" and "treachery of the anarchists" and the wonderful achievements, heroism, and correct leadership of the Spanish communists. Anyone not familiar with the communists will come to the conclusion upon reading these articles that the revolt was made by a united front of the socialists and communists, that the communists were the leading factors; that the anarchists were used as strike-breakers by the government, and that whenever there was fighting on the barricades the anarchists would take their guns and proverbial bombs and fight on the side of the capitalists and fascists.

Here is a sample of the reasoning of "The Daily Worker":

"The monstrous betrayal of the anarchist leaders was the worst blow of all and showed them, as Marxism has always described them, as enemies of the proletarian revolution, who in the struggles in Spain were found on the barricades on the side of fascism."

Since not even communists will believe the charge we shall not trouble ourselves to refute it. But here is another gem of communist journalism, which I quote because of its implications as I shall point out.

"Nothing expresses the treacherous conceptions of the anarchist leaders more than their published comment when a number of Spanish communist leaders were sent to African penal colonies. Borrowing their phrases from the Trotzkyites, the anarchists declared to the communist prisoners: 'Go, build Socialism now in one country!'

The purpose of the above charge is twofold. It tries to show the anarchists as laughing at their opponents' misfortune, but especially it tries to show the American readers that those exiled to Africa were communists, the anarchists being left free at home. But here are the facts. A group of 124 prisoners, mostly captured rebels of the abortive anarchist revolution in the Upper Llobregat region, Catalonia and a few others picked up in Barcelona and Valencia, were exiled to Africa. Of the total of 124, only four were communists—one Trotzkyite and three Stalinists. The other 120 were anarchists. These are the facts. The story in "The Daily Worker" is fiction.

The Daily Worker calls the anarchists traitors because they did not fight side by side with president Companys for independence of Catalonia. Let us analyze the Catalonian mess. There was a united front of the four or five different communist factions, reform syndicalists, socialists, political syndicalists, who in turn had united with the bourgeois Catalonian separatists, the "ESQUERRA", or ruling party, the latter having among their leaders such men as Companys who as president of Catalonia was most to blame for the ruthless persecution of the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, and the suppression of their labor unions. Azana, who was premier during the exiling of anarchists to Africa and during the Casas Viejas Massacre; Menendez, ex-director of Public Security in the Cabinet of Azana and the one directly responsible for the order not to take prisoners or wounded, given to Captain Rojas, who executed these Casas Viejas prisoners; Galarza, the man who under Azana organized the Assault Guard which did the massacring in the Casas Viejas, and which together with the Civil Guards, had killed over 400 workers in the three years of the "Republic of workers of all classes"; and similar politicians whose hands are stained with blood.



The above was the united front that the anarchists refused to join. Yet, they joined the general strike, and when groups of armed anarchists forcibly opened their union halls the police of Companys was sent to arrest them. This resulted in riot and bloodshed, which caused Mr. Dencas, Minister of the Interior of Catalonia, to speak to the "citizens" over the radio and say: "The anarchists are again at their evil work. We will first defeat the fascist government of Madrid, which will be to-night and tomorrow we'll settle it with the anarchists, and I assure you, citizens, that they will trouble us no longer." No, the anarchists could not very well afford to grease the rope with which they were to be hanged.

When talking of Asturias, The Daily Worker only mentions communists and socialists, leaving the anarchists entirely out of the picture. Yet, none fought so bravely, so enthusiastically, so humanely as the anarchists. Jose Maria Martinez, recognized as the "leader" of the Asturian anarchists was killed in action in Gijon. And "La Libertaria", the young anarchist of Casas Viejas fame died manning a machine gun in Oviedo.

Harry Gannes makes it his business to convince the readers of The Daily Worker that the anarchists did not participate in the Asturian revolution. Yet, in the same article, he quotes from an appeal of the Spanish International Labor Defense, which reads: "In Spain, the socialists, communists, and anarchists have fought side by side against their class enemies" Harry Gannes should have deleted the word "anarchists" from that quotation so that his lies might at least have the virtue of consistency if nothing else. But, then, this united front business has been the sales talk of the communists for years, and an Appeal on the basis of "united front" may be much more effective in cash results. Now that the Scottsboro fountain is drying up, the finance artists of the communist church are looking around for another source of supply so that there may be funds for publishing papers where all the Ganneses may print

their lies and Spain for some time to come, will be the most juicy bait to offer to such suckers as have not yet opened their eyes to communist practises.

The cry of Gannes is the cry of spite because the anarchists are the leading dynamic force of the Spanish Proletariat, and in the words of Eusebio C. Carbo, Secretary of the I.W.M.A. commenting on the Catalanian operetta revolution "no revolution may be made in Spain without the anarchists, and much less against them".

Harry Gannes talks about such cities as Badalona and Sabadell in Catalonia, being taken over by the workers. Let me explain however, that although there might have been workers involved, these cities were simply declared a part of the Catalanian independent republic by their respective capitalist mayors, but there was nothing proletarian in it let alone communist... To give you an idea of the strength of the communists in Catalonia suffice it to say that of the one quarter of a million votes cast in Barcellona in the last elections, Stalin's candidate polled 1,400 votes. Their following in the rest of Spain is not much better judging from the fact that in spite of the system of proportional representation they won only one seat in Congress in the same elections. The socialists in spite of their decline won 62 seats. A ratio of 62 to 1! Now, when we consider that the anarchists in Spain are admittedly as strong as the socialists, the relative strength of the three groups will not be hard to determine.

The fact that, with the exception of Asturias, at no place was there any social revolution (there were isolated uprisings in Valencia, Andalucia, etc., in which the anarchists took a leading part) shows that no successful revolution is possible in Spain without the anarchists. The socialists have been emasculated through generations of preaching submission and class collaboration, and the communists, had they had the desire to do something, lacked the energy, because they had exhausted it all in making noise. The anarchists



are tools of nobody Russia has taught them a lesson.

The sad reality is that there are over 30,000 workers in prison, together with the children of those valiant rebels who died in the battlefield or were executed in jail, must be aided regardless of their political ideas. ---ONOFRE DALLAS.

(A d d e n d u m)

THE author of the above article has pointed out a number of the major distortions of the actual history of the October revolt in Spain. However, of greater significance than the mere coloring of the facts is the conscious and deliberate effort of Harry Gannes to depict "Anarchism, in the person of the Spanish Anarchist leaders", as a counter-revolutionary movement performing "a service for Spanish capitalism which its mercenary, criminal, Foreign Legion could never have performed alone with its most modern means of mass murder. "Not satisfied with his idyllic picture of "our Spanish Communist Party" leading the October revolution in Asturias, in contrast with the treacherous role of the "Anarchist leaders", Gannes goes out of his way to delve into the "origin" and "theory" of the "petty-bourgeois" philosophy of anarchism. That alone must give the reader something to pause and think about. Is it possible that the invincible and divine--I mean dialectically materialistically--inspired Communist Party fears that the heroic struggles of the revolutionary workers of Spain might inspire the workers of the world with the genuinely revolutionary aspirations of Libertarian Communism, which are diametrically opposed to a dictatorship of the Communist Party? Is it possible that the bureaucracy of the Communist Party is afraid of losing its followers if Anarchism were really understood, and that therefore they try to throw as much smoke as possible about the Anarchist Movement in Spain and thus prevent genuine understanding and knowledge from filtering through to their followers? We wonder.

Were Gannes merely guilty of an occasional distortion of fact one might excuse him on the ground of ignorance. But when we find the entire series of historical events "fixed up" to suit particular pattern, then we must regard it in the light of the following considerations.

1-The account was intended for consumption outside of Spain, since it could never receive credence where the actual facts are known;

2-The Communist Party is trying to build up capital for itself on the basis of false pretensions;

3-The Communist Party is trying to built itself up by the double route of exaggerating its own role and belittling and distorting the role of the most important revolutionary movement in Spain, in order to defend its "hold" on the revolutionary working class movement against the further development on an international scale of the Anarcho-Syndicalist movement which is today so powerful in Spain.

Of all Gannes' charges against the anarchist movement, there is one which appears to be more specific than the others. He says that the anarchists, "not believing in proletariat struggles, fight against strikes of a political nature, especially one leading to the armed insurrection for workers power".

What does Gannes mean by "proletariat struggles"? Isn't a struggle for economic demands a "proletariat struggle"? Is it possible that over 1,000,000 workers could have been organized into the C.N.T. (Anarcho-Syndicalist trade union confederation) if the anarchists did not believe in "proletariat struggles"? "Facts are stubborn things" as your own Lenin said, so why try to butt your head against them by wish-fulfillment thinking?

And did you dig your next fact all out of your own head too? "...they fight against strikes of a political nature ...!" This is the product of a deliberate Marxist campaign to misinterpret "anarchism"

for the "benefit" of the masses. Because the anarchists have always avoided parliamentary action, the Marxists have taken especial pains to "explain" to the masses that the anarchists "ignore" the "political" question. There could be no more deliberate distortion. The very fact that the anarchists seek a revolutionary solution to the problems of exploitation and suffering in the complete overthrow of the existing political system is proof enough that the anarchists do not ignore the "political" question, however much they may avoid parliamentarism.

But even if the theoretical position, as stated above, were not sufficient to refute Gannes' statement, the whole history of the anarchist movement, all over the world, and particularly in Spain, shouts denunciation of such libellous claims. Is Mr. Gannes' memory so short that he could not remember the nationwide 24 hour General Strike called by the C.N.T. not for economic demands, but to protest the execution of two revolutionists, just about one week before he vomited up his mess of lies on November 27, 1934? Did he forget that this strike was called after the uprising had been crushed, with thousands of militants killed and tens of thousands imprisoned, with everything under martial law, and all workers' organizations declared illegal? And did he forget how the "politically" minded Socialist unions, the U.G.T. refused to demonstrate their sympathies and solidarity with the condemned revolutionists and at the same time offer one more challenge to the authority of the reactionary state? And what did the "political" Workers Alliance do?

Why stop at that? Mr. Gannes must surely know, although he failed to say it in black and white, that it was the united front of anarchists and socialists in Asturias that made possible the heroic struggle. The C.P. is very small in Spain, and is divided into a number of different factions. The masses of workers are with the anarchists and socialists, and when the latter became genuinely revolutionary in their aspirations, the two came together of their own accord, the socialists

over the heads of their leaders, and the anarchists without any conflict because of the local and regional autonomy that exists in the federalist structure of the anarcho-syndicalist organization. The General Strike was successful in Asturias because both the C.N.T. and the U.G.T. worked together. Gijon, the most important harbor of Asturias, was captured by the workers behind the banners of the FAI and the C.N.T. (Iberian Anarchist Federation and National Confederation of Labor); Oviedo, capital of Asturias, was captured by a united front of anarchists, socialists and communists. Was this a "strike of political nature", Mr. Gannes?

And what about December, 1933, when the anarchists declared a Revolutionary General Strike and initiated a nationwide uprising against the new government of the Catholic reaction that had just won the election? The anarchists went "to the street" because they took at its face value the election campaign pledges of both "politically minded" socialists and communists that if the Catholics won the election, they would "come out on the street" and settle the issue of power there. And what did the communists answer when the anarchists called upon them to join the Revolutionary General Strike of a "political nature"? --Hold your breath if you don't know the answer.--The politically conscious C.P. answered, "We will join you in a General Strike for economic demands"!!

At a time when the anarchists were striking at the very roots of class domination and bending all efforts to overthrow an openly reactionary government before it had a chance to consolidate its position the C.P. was willing --nay, more than willing--actually eager to fight to for--economic demands! There are innumerable other instances of "Strikes of a political nature" conducted by the anarchists in Spain, some of the outstanding ones including the General Strike in Seville in 1932, which stopped General Saluja's counter-revolutionary attack that had become so formidable up to the advent of the General Strike of the C



that political" Socialist mayors and officials were fleeing from their offices by the hundred and even the Madrid government was preparing to take flight. And then there was the classic struggle of Barcelona, in 1909 against the Spanish Moroccan War.

So let us hear no more that stupid phrase that anarchists avoid "strikes of a political nature, especially one leading to the armed insurrection for workers power"

The second half of the quotation is an excellent example of the Delicious Vagueness which all Good Bureaucrats must develop to a high art. "Workers' power"-- what a delightfully generalized phrase! If by "workers' power" Gannes is merely depicting a new social order in which the producers control the social economy thru their own institutions, then, perhaps, the anarchists might be able to arrive at some agreement with him. But since the Russian Revolution, everyone understands quite clearly what a communist means by "workers' power". There is a fundamental difference between the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as a monopoly of the Communist Party and a new social order in which the producers have control of the communist economy. It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that anarchists are not particularly anxious to fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat, since they remember only too clearly how the anarchists were treated in Russia.

But the deduction that, that the anarchists do not fight for a new social order in which the exploitation of man by man will no longer exist, and in which the highly centralized state, with its monstrous bureaucracy, will no longer make of man a mechanical puppet, can be only the despicable product of a perverted communist logic, which makes the colossal assumption that the progress of the world is measured by the progress of the Communist Party

There is another curious fact to be noted in Gannes' treatment of the anarch-

ist movement of Spain. In making his criticism of the anarchist movement, he takes a very generous attitude. Although there are over 1,000,000 workers in the anarcho syndicalist movement, he whitewashes them of all responsibilities for their grave treacheries in the last uprising. They are not to blame; their intentions were good; their motives sincere. Who then was to blame for their aid to the Fascists and to the Foreign Legion? Who, but the Anarchist "leaders"?! The treachery and betrayal of the anarchist "leaders" is the constant theme that runs through his entire analysis. Ignoring the factual side of the accusation, which has been discussed above, let us consider a different side of the matter.

The very term anarchist "leader" is a contradiction which all anarchists recognize immediately. Of all the social movements on the current scene, the anarchist movement is the only one that completely discards the concept of "leader", that is the deification of an individual. When such a label is applied to the anarchists we can only smile at their ignorance. We must note that when discussing other movements, the critic, and particularly the communist critic, who loves to mix a little character slander with his criticism, always mentions his opponents, the leaders of the opposing movements, by name, not once but many times. Yet the most striking thing about Gannes' charges against the "Anarchist leaders" in Spain is that he never mentions a single one of these treacherous "leaders" by name! He can't name any "Anarchist leaders" because there are no anarchist "leaders"

There may be great theoreticians, great writers and journalists, courageous militants, great speakers, but none of them functions as a "leader". The anarchist movement has developed democratic forms of organization to the highest degree possible under the present adverse conditions. Policies and programs are formulated by the membership in their local unions, and are built up from the local unions through the local federations, regional confederations, and finally the national confederation.

An excellent instance of this was the united front of anarchists and socialists in Asturias. The National Committee had issued an advisory proclamation against such a united front on the basis of the attitude of the socialist politicians in the rest of Spain in allying themselves with all the former liberal politicians and the Catalan Nationalist movement. But the Asturian workers judged the situation in Asturias to be different. They believed that the Socialist workers of Asturias were genuinely revolutionary; so they called a regional convention to discuss the question. The result was that a large number of unions voted to join the united front immediately. Another large number decided in favor of a united front

in action, while a very small minority voted against any united front. There were no splits, of the Asturias Confederation from the National Confederation, or of the different sections of the Asturias Confederation from each other. There were no splits because there was no "line" handed down by an individual or committee that presumes to be all-knowing and whose authority must never be challenged.

And just as the Asturias Confederation acted on its own initiative, so did the other regional confederations act to meet their local situation, the National Confederation serving only to coordinate the experiences of all and weld a general policy to meet the national situation.

A. Bluestein

## Fascist America?

FIVE years of economic depression have produced a profound change in the attitude of large sections of our population toward the economic and political structure of American society. Millions of people are now more or less permeated with the feeling that the old "laissez-faire" system will never solve the problems of unemployment and poverty. They are dimly conscious of the fact that some fundamental change must take place

As an offsetting tendency to these deep popular stirrings we can observe the signs of an inevitable fascist counter current. And contributing indirectly toward this tendency is the attempt of certain liberals to convert our present economic society into that of State Capitalism while leaving political democracy intact. They do not realize that giving the state more and more power over the economic life of the people prepares the ground for Fascism. They wish to save political democracy but have no effective way of doing it, since they do not realize that a concentration of economic power in the hands of the state would be impossible without a like concentration of political power. What safeguards can they propose to prevent the state from overstepping the

bounds of economic dictatorship? How can they prevent the infiltration of dictatorship into every phase of life.

Because of a shrinkage in the foreign market, American capitalism tends to become more nationalistic. It is compelled to derive its nourishment by a more intensive exploitation of the workers at home. In its quest for the ever shrinking foreign market it is preparing to wrest it from other powers who are in a similar position. This leads to war. These two tendencies, a growing nationalism, and a belligerent imperialism are outstanding characteristics of fascism.

The declining standard of living, the increasing discontent of the workers as shown by the wave of strikes, and the fear of still more serious outbreaks, increase and solidify the reaction. The repressive organs of the state tend to increase. Democratic rights are curtailed, and the radical movement becomes subject to more intensive persecution.

A large and discontented middle class which is rapidly being shaken from its economic foundations by finance capital and by big industry may look to fascist



as the way out. Those who, like the liberals are inclined to exaggerate the potency of the democratic traditions in the U.S. should note such organizations (middle class in interests) as the K.K.K., the "vigilantes", the American Legion (who were given 75,000 rifles by the government), and other veteran organizations. Let them remember that the "sunny" South, land of race hatred and lynching, will extend a hearty welcome to the fascists (wit ess Huey Long)

The Pacific coast is noted for its fascist inclinations, the Criminal Syndicalist laws, the Everett Massacre, the Centralia case, the Mooney-Billings frame-up, the recent San Francisco murders, etc. The notorious anti-red raids under Palmer and Mitchell, the mass deportation of workers (which is still going on) the Sacco-Vanzetti murders, all go to show to what lengths a hysterical and blood-thirsty bourgeoisie will go. There is plenty of hatred for foreigners, Jews, Catholics, negroes and radicals among the Jingoos and Babbitts. The innumerable fascist organizations springing up throughout the land find ready recruits among these elements.

We have also to reckon with the yellow press (a la Hearst), the Boy Scouts, the pulpit, the radio, the chambers of commerce. All of these agencies are constantly spitting their venom, preparing the ground for fascism. The Civilian Conservation Corps directed by army officers, the transient camps, etc. may well become the American prototype of Hitler's concentration camps and forced labor camps.

It is evident that what is left of the American democratic traditions will not of itself be able to counteract the tremendous pressure of the forces that are making for fascism in this country. The real reasons for the feeble development of fascism (of the spectacular, openly murderous, German or Italian variety) here are: first, the rule of American capitalism is not as yet being seriously challenged by any revolutionary movement; second, there is the possibility of the gradual

growth of a more subtle type of Fascism, that is, an extremely nationalistic state capitalism without most of the superficial aspects of German or Italian fascism. For, the democratic illusions of the American people, which are much stronger than the degree of democracy existing would warrant, make it easier for the dominant group of capitalists to utilize the present political structure for instituting step by step their "corporate state" to pass law after law which, directly or indirectly, will deprive labor of whatever rights it now possesses in order to be able to lower wages, which will give even greater monopolistic powers to small groups of capitalists (note the effects of the N.R.A.) and finally to the reactionary point of self-sufficiency.

Fascism threatens when the ruling class can no longer exist side by side with a revolutionary mass movement. It then becomes necessary for the reaction to put an end to political democracy and destroy the labor movement. The capitalist class can then function only as a dictatorship by incorporating itself with the state.

When the contradictions of capitalism have reached the breaking point, when it can no longer make any concessions to the starving and rebellious masses, a decisive battle between the revolutionists and the reactionaries becomes inevitable. The conflict can end in only one way--either fascism or the social revolution.

American capitalism has not yet reached this point. It is wealthy and can still make concessions--but it cannot continue to do so indefinitely. It cannot lower the standard of living without generating a revolutionary movement, without protests and uprisings. Toledo, Minneapolis, San Francisco and the Gulf have shown that the American worker will fight. The fighting traditions of the American Labor movement will be revived. A series of mass movements will be the answer to the assaults upon the standard of living. All the pent up bitterness and discontent of the workers will explode.

To hasten the growth of effective mass



movements, to crystallize and strengthen them for the social revolution is the great task of the revolutionary vanguard.

Unfortunately there is no revolutionary movement of any importance in this country. The socialists are classcollaborators and their parliamentary twaddle, their disgusting opportunism was responsible to a large degree for fascism in Germany. The Communists do not beleive in nor do they practice workers' democracy. Their autocratic methods, their policy of Rule or Ruin has brought great harm to the labor movement both here and abroad. They aim to subjugate the labor movement to a party bureaucracy. They lead the workers to think only in terms of Dictatorship, thereby prejudicing them against democracy.

The revolutionary movement in America has yet to be built. The mind of the American worker must be conditioned against any and all dictatorships. The democratic traditions of the American people must be used to show that only a workers' democracy can prevent Fascism, that only the de m-

ocratic economic organizations of the workers, such as revolutionary industrial unions, can combat Fascism. The experiences of the proletariat in Italy, in Germany and in Spain must be related to them to show the value of direct action and the futility of parliamentary tactics and political parties as a means of fighting against Fascism.

A united front of all those who believe in workers' democracy as opposed to authoritarian socialism and to the domination of the labor movement by a political party must be formed. A realistic approach to the practical problems of organization must be worked out and a revolutionary program with direct action tactics and consistent with workers' democracy and the ultimate aim of socialization of industry and the abolition of the political state must be developed. And, armed with such a program, we can indeed prepare ourselves for the fight against Fascism.

SAM WEINER

## Exiles in France

The following letter, which we are reprinting in part, was recently received by one of our comrades. The name of the correspondent is being withheld for obvious reasons. The letter speaks for itself.

Nice, Dec. 10th, 1934.

Dear M--,

I am enclosing a news item received from Paris re our persecuted Russian comrades.

Such things in former days used to arouse the indignation of the world. But now they have become a daily thing, actually the governmental routine, and not only in some particular country but practically all over Europe. There is no doubt that Fascism is now having its day. Nor is it only Italy and Germany. Fearful things are going on in all the Balkan States, as well as in Austria, Hungary, etc. And what that rotten little new nationalistic State of Jugoslavia is now doing, you certainly know

from the press. France also is on the sure road to Fascism, slowly but quite unmistakably. The expulsion of "foreigners" has become a daily thing, and among them are many politicals (Italians, Russians, Macedonians, etc.) Most of them cannot leave the country nor enter another. The result is, they are found again in France within a few days of expulsion. Therefore our wise Solons have now passed a new law -- from 1 to 5 years in prison for every man who is ordered to leave the country and does not do so. It is actually a physical impossibility these days -- lack of money and lack of passport and visa. Till now such a "crime" was punished here in France with the usual ONE MONTH in prison, and the maximum was 6 months. Now the good judges give them the limit FIVE years! After the expiration of the prison term they are to be expelled again! The pleas of the more liberal papers that these expelled men are COMPELLED to remain in France because it is impossible for them to go anywhere is NOT considered



by the courts. The law is law, and that's all.

I have no time to write you more, but it is enough to say that conditions here and throughout Europe are getting simply worse, both politically and economically, than they have been before the great French Revolution when the peasantry were tramping up and down the country hungry and starving. The symbol of that Fraternity, Liberty and Humanity proclaimed by the Revolution is now left only on the prison doors. You know of course that on every prison those words are engraved in stone, and so they remain as dead as that stone. ....

This is just a greeting, in haste.

Fraternally,

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#### FINANCIAL REPORT -- February 16, 1935

##### INCOME:

Subscriptions	\$48.75
Collected at Vanguard party	13.45
Collected at Spanish affair	12.50
Donation	1.55
Bundle orders	1.00
Donation from sympathizer	25.00

TOTAL \$102.25

##### EXPENDITURES:

Machine	\$102.00
Type	17.45
Typesetters and drums	23.97
Rollers recored	5.10
Cleaning materials	.65
Ink	.60
Paper	2.55
Stationary	2.20

TOTAL \$154.52

##### RECAPITULATION:

Total expenditures	\$154.52
Total income	102.25

DEFICIT \$ 52.27

B. SHURMAN, Financial Secretary

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"Vanguard Youth", a junior branch of the Vanguard Group, has lectures and discussions every Sunday, 2 PM, 34-5 Ave., N.Y. City

## Book Review

"Fontamara" by Ignazio Silone

Published by Harrison, Smith, 1934.

This novel derives its title from a puny village in Southern Italy. Indeed Fontamara is not to be distinguished from a thousand other small places in the same region except that its poverty may be more acute.

But Ignazio Silone, exile and revolutionary did not attempt to write a merely depressing novel. Unlike our own mid-western realists, he was not content to write a chronicle which relates all that is flat, stale and wearisome. What engrossed him in Fontamara was that some years ago it witnessed an uprising against the fascist government of Rome. The substance of the book is the transformation of the apathy of the villagers into militancy, their growing sense of cleavage that exists between the purposes of the government and themselves, and their conviction that they must rely upon their own endeavors and unite with each other to achieve aims which transcend those of any individual.

The author is an intelligent man whose powers of observation are too discerning to permit him to idealize the peasants. With sardonic humor he has delineated their foibles and weaknesses. With pungent wit he has described their helplessness before the complex urban civilization which has upset their ancient social patterns. At the same time, however, he has realized that peasants can be remade as human beings by adopting a revolutionary purpose which is larger than any individual. In this way they attain tragic dignity. And so the novel which began as humor ends in the spirit of authentic tragedy.

Silone has written a memorable, exciting book. There is no formal eloquence in its austere style, but there exudes from its pages a hatred of fascism and those sinister forces within it that are grinding down the inhabitants of Fontamara which is but a mirror of the terror and misery in

all of Italy's villages. They are too unlettered to comprehend the processes by which they are being crushed. They always knew that fine gentlemen were cunning rogues, but have always gone to them when they required a favor. Now they saw clearly that all the fine gentlemen were their enemies. They had to array themselves against their common enemy. With the aid of some radicals they began to discuss the publication of a paper. As the first issue is being distributed troops invade the village, and the militant spirits flee or are killed.

The characterizations in this book are not very arresting, but Berardo Viola is well done. He illustrates best the whole course of the book. A landless farmer, he is a rebel against authority. But like many another man he becomes absorbed in his petty personal affairs when he decides to marry. He abandons his fellow villagers and goes to Rome to make money. He is victimized there and denied work, and then encounters a radical who is engaged in underground activity.

He is thrown into jail, and refuses to betray his comrade. He says to his friend, "If I turn traitor the damnation of Fontamara is eternal. If I turn traitor, hundreds of years will pass before such an occasion presents itself again. And if I die, I shall be the first farmer to die not for himself but for the others; for the rest of the farmers; to unite the rest of the farmers."

It is the recognition by Silone that such changes can take place in quite ordinary people that constitutes the peculiar strength of this book. It is the truth of this fact that is a profound portent and one that must cause fascists to quake in their more rational moments.

M. ALEXANDERS

JOIN US IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE REAPPEARANCE OF "VANGUARD" SAT. EVE. MAR. 2nd at Free Workers Center, 219 - 2nd Ave. NYC  
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